The Advantages and Disadvantages of Teaching English for Academic Purposes from the 'Wide-Angle' Approach and from the 'Narrow-Angle' and more Specific Purpose

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Abstract

This essay briefly describes two approaches to teaching the English language in academic and higher education: English for academic reasons and English for particular purposes. The perspectives of the wide-angle and narrow-angle approaches were therefore compared. This work's main components in defining the fundamental difference between the two methodologies were the benefits and drawbacks of using each of them in an academic setting. According to this analysis, a wide-angled approach is created for students with requirements that are somewhat comparable and less specialist, and a narrow-angled or particular approach is created for students with needs that are more specialized demands.

Due to the word limit restrictions and the purpose of this paper, which is to outline the contentious views and arguments surrounding this field of study, this work, however, only examined the potential positive and negative aspects of both approaches in a broad sense. It also painted a picture of the argument over which method should be used to teach English in all academic and professional contexts. The necessity to expose pupils to English for academic reasons has resulted from a noteworthy growth in the number of international students in universities and colleges throughout the world. Students enter English classes for academic reasons in order to acquire the skills required for studying certain academic disciplines. The majority of pupils are not just interested in learning English as a language; they also need to do so in order to complete particular duties.

Introduction

This piece of work exposes approaches to teaching English for academic purposes in higher education. It focuses on the two main approaches to teaching the English language, which are English for academic purposes (EAP) and English for specific purposes (ESP). It demonstrates an overview of both approaches in relevance to the works of some specialised writers in this field, such as Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) and Basturkmen (2006). All of which assume that the English language will become more important in the world of academics all over the world. English is increasingly being taught as a second language, and it has dominated most countries.

This paper focuses on arguments around the concepts of wide-angle and narrow-angle approaches to teaching academic English. It explores the possible advantages and disadvantages of applying those approaches in different settings. This involves an examination of the nature of each approach and what and who it serves. Teaching academic English from a wide angle is seen as a teacher-centralised approach in which the teaching situation is more general and flexible. While teaching English for academic purposes from a narrow angle is regarded as a learned-centralised approach in which the teaching situation is more specific and designed to meet certain students' demands, However, it is agreed by many concerned writers in this field that there is a shared ground between the two approaches.

Because ESP courses are so specialised, a teacher must take on a new role and use a different teaching approach to impart knowledge to his pupils. Prior to anything else, he or she must ascertain the requirements of the students, since they will ultimately dictate the approach, context, and difficulty of the language instruction (Robinson, 1991). The knowledge of the requirement is what separates ESP from general English, according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987). Therefore, it may be concluded that an ESP practitioner is essentially a teacher of general or academic English unless he or she is aware of and pays attention to the unique requirements of his or her pupils (Robinson, 1991). However, it's possible that some language knowledge and abilities will be applicable to and valuable in a variety of fields and occupations (Holme, 1996).

For instance, the communication competency requirements for several professions may be identical (Potocar, 2002).

Discussion and Analysis

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) involves teaching learners to utilise language for the purposes of study in the formal educational system (Jordan, 1997). This approach is employed in classroom interactions, in student writing, in the teaching of undergraduates and postgraduates, and in the research of genres. Essential elements of teaching English for academic purposes include teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration. The knowledge of the teachers is obtained through their desire to investigate the ideas and course plans of the subjects that the students are learning.

English for academic purposes can take place in different situations and settings. Jordan (1997) explained, "The settings in which it may be practised range from entirely-speaking contexts to individual countries of students" (p. 2). Many countries have English as a second or foreign language, and they may need it for higher education studies. Academic English is being used for specific purposes in secondary, college, and other levels of education of the same importance (Basturkmen, 2006).

A programme of English for academic purposes focuses on the skills of listening, reading, writing, and speaking, as well as grammar and vocabulary. The key point for EAP is the needs analysis of learners. The teachers determine what the student needs and what they need to do to enable them to achieve their goals and targets while keeping in mind the differences in the culture of education. Peterwagner (2005) commented, "English is no longer viewed as a goal in the learning process but as a vehicle in which the goals are acquired" (p. 29).

It is one of the English language teaching classifications created as a result of the need for specific knowledge of the language to meet special educational or occupational purposes. According to (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) It has developed because of the "emphasis it places on the importance of the learners and their attitudes towards learning as a discipline" (p. 8). Its

development is based on the importance of the English language in business, science, international communication, and communication itself. It is based on the needs of learners in both the methodology and content of what is being taught in class (Onate, 2007).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach that is learner-centred. It provides learners with the opportunity to learn a language that is foreign to them (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Therefore, they can make use of the language in their fields of interest, such as medicine and science. ESP teaching is a goal-oriented method in which students have specified goals and objectives that they hope to achieve. ESP became highly demanded because of the fact that vocational training has increased over time and learning has also increased throughout the world. Also, the spread of globalisation has resulted in an increase in the use of English, as more people are now using it in their occupational contexts.

ESP may make use of the various available methodologies and techniques in specific teaching situations that are different from general English (Robinson, 1991). ESP may be designed for learners who are either in professional or working environments. There are certain factors that will help teachers improve their skills and knowledge in a specific area of English for Specific Purposes. They include the teachers' willingness and interest in their subjects and the urge to learn more. Also, teachers' collaboration, in which they should look for subject specialists to review their work and wait for feedback, as well as confidence, which is obtained from the engagement of subject specialists and exploring new subject matters by the teachers.

Teaching English from a wide angle has the advantage of focusing not just on forms but on a variety of subject-specific communication skills. This enables learners to acquire perfect skills as well. "A wide-angle approach has the benefit of being addressed to students from any and across any discipline" (Hall & Hewings, 2001, p. 82). This is efficient in terms of both financial situations and the number of students being taught.

This approach allows for collaboration with other subject specialists. The collaboration enables the writing and editing of materials that are useful in the teaching of English and science

(Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Collaborations also allow for the examination of interactions that exist between roles, texts, and contexts. Materials are obtained from different sources; the ability to re-evaluate and restructure the information enables the students to develop valuable skills that can be of use in the other subjects they are undertaking.

A wide-angled approach to teaching makes the learning of the English language more motivated and captivating. Students are able to utilise the language for real purposes. This makes the students more confident and independent. If the element of group work is included, the students will be able to develop collaborative skills, which significantly contribute to their social value (Gillett & Wray, 2006).

This approach has the disadvantage of assuming that the acquisition of knowledge is a stretching process. It assumes that learners should first master the wider angle of a discipline before mastering the specific features of the discipline. While learning is not an extended process, learners acquire the features of a language system through their own choice and effort when they are ready. This approach should focus on the preparation of learners to do library research, write essays, listen to lectures, and read textbooks (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001).

Another disadvantage is the confusion this approach may create. This is so because it raises questions about what the learners are learning (Hyland, 2006). The students are swamped with a vast amount of information from a number of sources, making their comprehension of the concepts unclear. It is also difficult to find texts and information sources that can be understood by everyone. Information sharing on subjects of interest can result in difficulties. The result is that the learners have difficulties evaluating and drawing conclusions about the information they should put into practical use.

EAP teachers have the requirement of gaining a large amount of knowledge and skills that are unavailable from the training courses that they go through (Benesch, 2001). Knowledge also needs a lot of time to be acquired, as it involves a set of steps. The wide-angle approach to teaching is sometimes unresponsive to the ways of writing that are preferred in particular

disciplines. The various disciplines in the education system have preferred ways of writing that are fundamental to their concepts.

English for specific purposes has the advantage of focusing on the needs of the learners. It seeks to provide assistance that relates to the discipline of interest without wasting any time on concepts that are more general. It is successful and effective in valuing learning and knowledge for learners. The learners acquire the necessary and required knowledge and skills that are of significant use in the academic and working environments.

Specificity enables us to highlight the differences that exist among disciplines in both writing and reading. Students are given opportunities to explore the ways in which meanings are expressed in texts. The students are also able to identify and compare the similarities and differences that exist in texts (Hyland, 2006). Therefore, teachers are able to satisfy the needs and demands of the students. This approach is effective for learners as they are able to acquire structures that relate to the variety of meanings that are used in the workplace, academic, or professional environments (Basturkmen, 2006).

The English for Specific Purposes approach as a form of teaching is a more motivating method than general English. This is because the focused nature and relevance of the teaching make it more widely accepted by learners. High motivation enables learners to undertake more subject-specific work. Teaching English for specific purposes involves a combination of attitude, abilities, and experience.

A narrow-angled approach has the disadvantage of being usually devoted to a small number of learners or students who need definite, focused research. This causes the complexity of input at some stages for any subject specialist. Some authors, such as Widdowson (1983), argued that the more specific perspective of English for Specific Purposes is a form of training as opposed to education.

Some of the teachers in the education system are anxious about change. They are reluctant to change from teaching general English to teaching English for specific purposes. Some new

teachers who teach ESP may also prefer to use materials that they are comfortable with, meaning that they will not stretch the learners. The depth of knowledge in a subject for a teacher depends on the pre-experience and post-experience of the learners, how much they know about their discipline, and the specific details of the language and skills that they are required to know (Harding, 2007).

Conclusion

This paper exposes in brief the nature and general characteristics of two types of English language teaching in academic and higher education: English for academic purposes and English for specific purposes. This led to an investigation of the perspectives of the wide-angle approach and the narrow-angle approach for both of them. While doing so, the advantages and disadvantages of applying any of these two approaches in the academic environment were the key elements of this work in clarifying the underlying line between them. This comparison has concluded that a wide-angled approach is one that is devised for learners who have needs that are somehow similar and are less specialised, while a narrow-angled or specific approach is one designed for learners who have needs that are similar and highly specialised.

However, this work elucidated the possible positive and negative aspects of both approaches in a general way, and this is because of the limitations restricted by the word limit and the purpose of this paper, which is to give the outlines of the controversial views and arguments related to this area of study. It also provided a picture of the debate over which is the more useful and effective approach to follow in teaching English in all academic and professional settings. This debate is due to a noticeable increase in the number of foreign students in universities and colleges all over the world, causing the need to introduce students to English for academic purposes. In order to gain the tools necessary for the study of specific academic subjects, students undertake courses in English for academic purposes. Most students are not only interested in English as a language but also because they require it in order to undertake certain tasks.

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